

Legislative Office Building, Room 5008
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Email: Kathy.Tallarita@po.state.ct.us
KTallarita@aol.com
At the Capitol: (860) 240-8530
In District: (860) 741-6759

Kathy Tallarita
State Representative

*“It is an honor to be your
Representative in Hartford.
Please call on me if I can be of
any assistance to you.”*



State Representative
Kathy Tallarita

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Dear Friend,

As this newsletter to you goes to press, I'm proud of the way the Democrats have handled a very difficult fiscal situation. With tax revenues declining significantly because of the recession and Sept. 11, we are faced with a huge budget gap. We Democrats hate to raise taxes but we also feel a strong allegiance to the people who sent us to Hartford – and who are counting on us for such vital services as education, health care and environmental protection.

In April, we passed a balanced budget that spent *LESS* than the one proposed by Governor Rowland in February. Our budget restored more than \$45 million in local aid cuts, and tens of millions more in other programs. We did this by proposing a modest 1% surcharge only on the income of people who make more than \$1 million a year. But Governor Rowland vetoed our budget.

We're back negotiating with the Republicans, but it's been tough. The gap we have to close stands at \$350 million. The Republican leaders of the House and Senate refuse to close the gap with anything but spending cuts that would hurt **the elderly, students, children, women needing health care and so many more**. They would also cut local aid, and that would almost certainly mean your town would have to **raise property taxes**. We hope to convince the Republicans to compromise – that it takes two to tango. We'll agree to budget cuts as long as they agree to raising new revenues. We're hoping they will meet us halfway. That's what we think is fair, especially for families like yours.

Very truly yours, Kathy Tallarita

What's New at the DMV

Emissions Exemptions For Late Model Vehicles

Effective July 1, 2002, new motor vehicles will be exempt from emissions testing. The exemption applies to model years 2000 and up and the exemption period is four years from registration date for new vehicles.

Vehicles currently registered in Connecticut that are model years 2000 and up will be mailed an extension sticker, which is valid for a period of four years from the model year of the vehicle.

Emissions Test Rescheduling for Certain Vehicles

Due to the fact that the contract to operate Connecticut's current emissions system will not be renewed, DMV is implementing a new program which will provide for emissions testing at approximately 300 existing dealer and repairer facilities located throughout the state. However, due to the time required to implement the new program, the Commissioner will be extending the expiration dates for motor vehicles currently scheduled to be tested between July 1, 2002 and March 1, 2003. The owners of these vehicles will be issued a letter by DMV to confirm the extension of the date shown on their current windshield stickers. Anyone whose emissions sticker expires prior to July 1, 2002 will be expected to complete their emissions testing.

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Cleaning up the “Sooty Six”

Once again, in an effort to clean up the so-called “Sooty Six,” the General Assembly passed legislation this session that requires all power plants to comply with current clean air standards by January 1, 2005. This year’s action, which has been signed by the Governor, strikes the delicate balance between maintaining clean, healthy air and protecting the reliability of our electricity supply. Furthermore, the legislation reinforces the General Assembly’s commitment to ensuring the highest quality of life for Connecticut residents. *(PA 02-64)*



Representative Tallarita and Senator Kissel with area high school students who recently received scholarships from Cox Communications.

Preventing Sexual Assault on Students

In the wake of reports that some coaches may have taken advantage of students, we passed a bill which makes it a crime for an athletic coach or a person who provides intensive, ongoing instruction to engage in sexual intercourse or have sexual contact with someone receiving that coaching or instruction who is either a secondary school student receiving coaching or instruction in school or under age 18.

Sexual intercourse under these circumstances is now second-degree sexual assault, punishable by one to 10 years in prison (with a nine-month mandatory minimum), a fine of up to \$10,000, or both. It makes sexual contact under these circumstances fourth-degree sexual assault, punishable by up to one year in prison, a fine of up to \$2,000, or both.

Intramural or interscholastic coaches have been added to the list of mandated child abuse reporters, which also includes schoolteachers, principals, and school paraprofessionals. It raises the penalty for any mandated reporter who fails to report from up to \$500 to between \$500 and \$2,500. *(PA 02-106)*

Mercury Education and Reduction

In an attempt to limit the spread of the dangerous element mercury, the General Assembly passed legislation this year that restricts the sale of a number of mercury added products, and bans the sale of mercury thermometers, novelties and other products beginning in 2003. Furthermore, the legislation requires products containing mercury to be labeled and requires manufacturers of these products to develop and implement plans for their collection and recycling. Examples of novelties that may contain mercury are toys, games, ornaments, holiday decorations, apparel, jewelry, figurines and yard statues. *(PA 02-90)*

Minimum Wage Increase

Many residents in our state support their families with a minimum wage income. In order to help them, the General Assembly passed legislation increasing the minimum wage from \$6.70 to \$6.90 by January 1, 2003, and to \$7.10 by January 1, 2004. These increases will help workers make ends meet, especially those in difficult, low-paying jobs. Also included in this act is an extension of the sunset date of the tip credit provision that gives employers an offset against the minimum wage for employees who regularly receive tips. *(PA 02-33)*



Senior Citizens Financial Interests

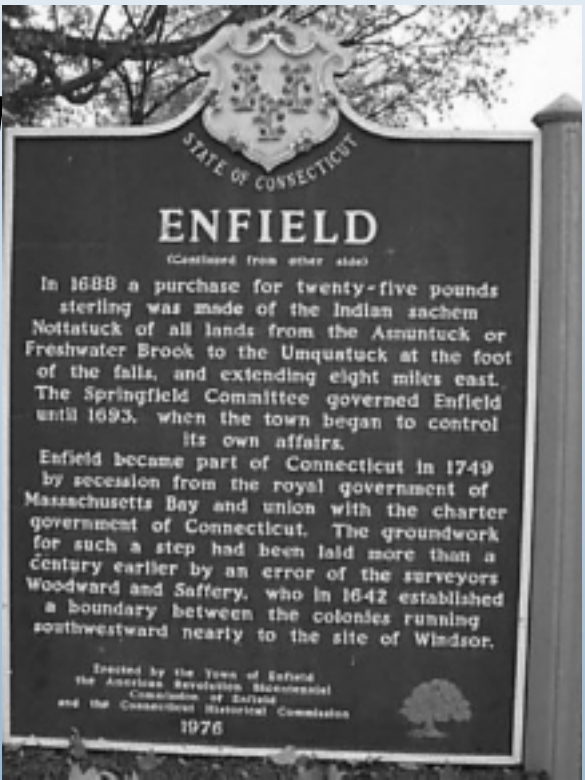
Protecting the interests of our seniors is of the utmost importance to all of us. That’s why the General Assembly passed legislation this session that requires insurance companies that offer both car and homeowners insurance to make clear to policyholders 55 years of age and older that they may designate a third party to receive cancellation or non-renewal notices. *(PA 02-60)*

Nursing Home Closure Notice

Ensuring adequate care and facilities for our seniors has long been a priority of the General Assembly. As a result, the legislature passed a bill this session that requires nursing homes and health care facilities seeking to terminate service or decrease bed capacity to send a copy of the request to the Office of Long-Term Care Ombudsman. The ombudsman must hold a public hearing at the facility within 30 days and the facility must also notify in writing all patients or other responsible party. *(SB 360)*

Extending Individual Rights

The House Democrats recognize the importance of family, regardless of how family is defined. PA 02-105 extends important rights to all people, married or not, to help them better deal with difficult decisions during stressful times. Under the new legislation, individuals will be allowed to specify non-related people as their heirs, beneficiaries or medical caregivers. They will be allowed to make health related decisions including life support, autopsy, organ donation and cremation commitments. They will even be able to file wrongful death claims and have victim status in the event of a murder. *(PA 02-105)*



Reporting Prescription Errors

Prescription drug errors are a major concern. PA 02-48 establishes protections for consumers to prevent future mistakes. This act requires the consumer protection commissioner to adopt regulations requiring pharmacies to establish quality assurance programs designed to detect and prevent prescription errors. It defines a “prescription error” as an act or omission of clinical significance in dispensing a drug that results in, or may reasonably be expected to result in, a patient’s injury or death.

Pharmacies must report errors to the prescribing practitioner, the patient, or the caregiver or appropriate family member of a patient who is dead or cannot comprehend. In addition, the act requires each pharmacy to (1) post signs and include notices on receipts or in prescription packaging informing consumers of how to report prescription errors and (2) keep records about errors. *(PA 02-48, effective October 1, 2002)*

